

Borderlines

June 2012

The Magazine of Llandrindod Wells and District U3A



Introduction from the Editor

Hello and welcome to the June edition of Borderlines. My thanks to all the contributors and my apologies to those who have had their material held over. Having appealed at the last meeting for contributions, I was then deluged. Some of this has been edited to ensure it fitted on to a page, so if you have access to the website you may find there an expanded version with more pictures.

How warm was your welcome?

We are keen to ensure our club remains friendly and accessible as our membership grows. To this end, Ann Morgan, the Coordinator of Welcomers, is considering increasing their number and role. Think back to your first (or indeed, any) monthly meeting. Did you feel nervous and isolated, or welcomed and cherished? How could we improve? One of the ideas put forward so far has been to bridge the gap between being welcomed at the door and the start of the lecture by having more Welcomers in the main hall to talk to new members and introduce them to others. For this, we would obviously need more volunteers. Opinions, experiences and all offers of help gratefully received. Ann's telephone number is 01597 822082

Promotion of Non U3A Events

Just a reminder – as I mentioned at the May meeting, it is the Committee's policy (and has been for quite a while) not to promote events at U3A meetings unless they are organised by U3A. This includes "leafleting" the chairs & making announcements at meetings, but posters may be placed on the Notice Board.

JANE MALVERN

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Cover picture : The Gardens at Keukenhof. Elaine and David Blackman

Our Utrecht holiday

On April 17th this year, we set out by train for a week in Holland. We started with a day in Utrecht itself. The old town has lots of traditional-style buildings alongside the many canals, but we also visited the Rietveld-Schroder House, built in 1924 in the modernist style – the first floor rooms can be reconfigured by moving the walls. While trying to reach an interesting-looking tower (an old water tower, now a defunct museum) we found ourselves in an area inhabited by some ladies of negotiable affection!

The next day we went to the Floriade; held every ten years, this is billed as a World Horticultural Expo. I have to say, we were disappointed, finding the horticultural element to be minimal; although there were a few interesting and attractive show gardens they were not a major part of the show. In particular the national pavilions had little if anything to do with gardening, they were simply selling stuff. But there was a fire-breathing dragon!

The next item on our itinerary was a visit to the gardens at Keukenhof, which were a complete contrast. This is mainly a spring garden, whose main attraction is the millions of bulbs – tulips, hyacinths (amazing perfume), grape hyacinth, daffodils, etc. mostly planted in swathes and blocks of blending or contrasting colour. It's not to everyone's taste, but it's hugely impressive in scale if nothing else. There are also wilder areas, display gardens, glasshouses displaying new cultivars of bulbs (some of the parrot tulips were positively garish) among other things, and lots of different water features including a lake where you can “walk on water” – actually circular platforms whose tops are

flush with the water surface. Artworks in different styles are also scattered around the gardens. We could have spent longer there than we did, but there was a huge queue for the shuttle bus, and there were hold-ups on the way there, so we arrived rather later than planned. More time would have allowed a more relaxed visit instead of feeling pressured to make sure we didn't miss anything. Incidentally, this was the only area where we saw any bulb fields.



We then spent two days in Amsterdam. The Tulip Museum (yes, really) was small but very well done and we bought some lily bulbs & anemone corms. The Grachten Huis is a large house which has been restored and opened as a museum; this is excellent, with an audio guide and very clever projections. The boat trip on the canals was very interesting, and quite relaxing until we went out into the outer harbour – this was too much like being at sea for me, and some of the other vessels were rather larger than ours. We really enjoyed the houseboat museum, which is - a houseboat. Traditional Dutch canal barges are rather wider than British ones, so rather more roomy, but not as large as some of the modern barges which we saw on the big canal running alongside the railway. The Ship Museum is in a beautiful building whose courtyard has been roofed in glass in a similar style to the British Museum. Alongside the quay is a replica East Indiaman which gives an appreciation of how cramped (and insanitary) conditions must have been. Incidentally, Queen's Day is a big celebration in Holland, and part of the festivities is a funfair in the square outside the royal palace – you wouldn't get that outside Buckingham Palace!

For our final day we went to the seaside – having grown up beside the North Sea, we thought we'd like to see it from the other side. We took the train to The Hague, and a tram to Scheveningen, which has a very impressive beach (part of it is for nudists, but it was a little cold for that sort of thing). We then into the dunes behind the beach, which are a nature reserve covering a large area. A narrow road runs through, with a walkers' track one side and a bridleway the other. We heard the first Nightingales we have heard for some years, as well as a Bittern, and heard or saw several other species.

We thoroughly enjoyed our time in Holland, although we found travel rather expensive. People were friendly & helpful and English is widely spoken (thank goodness), we found some splendid places to eat, and our accommodation was very comfortable. A word of warning: when walking around it is vital to keep a lookout for the cyclists, they pretty much rule the road; some of them were texting as they rode, one man was taking photographs, and helmets are clearly for sissies!

Elaine and David Blackman

Clive Barrett continues his profile of Interest Groups with :

THE ART HISTORY GROUP.

The U3A Art History Group meets at the Thomas Shop, Penybont on the third Tuesday of each month at 10-30a.m. The members would describe themselves as a “teach yourself and tell others about it” group. They have bags of enthusiasm, and some individuals have been to Art school. They have kept mainly to European art up to the present, where there is a great subject variety. Artists studied have varied from Klimt to Heath Robinson; from Caravaggio to the Scottish Colourists and from Lowry to Modigliani. From time to time the successful group travels to exhibitions at major galleries and has already visited those at Liverpool, Birmingham, Cardiff and Salford.

The healthy state of the group is shown by the fact that at present there are 26 members, a maximum and as there is no room for new recruits a waiting list is kept. For the February meeting there was a quiz, and it was also announced that Miss Joy Ashton had very kindly donated her entire collection of transparencies and slides to the U3A interest group. The subject for March was Margaret Tarrant, an artist and illustrator between the world wars, notably of children’s books and bibles. L.S. Lowry, famous for his stark portrayal of Northern industrial scenes and of course his “match stick” men was the subject for April. This was followed in May with a trip to Salford Quays to visit the Lowry Exhibition. The Group Leader is Jill Mouncer, for more information please contact her on 01597 823522.



Some of the Art History Group on the trip to Salford:

L-R Judith Lloyd Thomas; Marjorie Oakley; Margaret Eastal; Betty Jones; Dot Baynham; Catherine Clarke; Chris Hamer; Jill Mouncer; Vic Everill; Mary Davies and Alwyn Batley.

Photograph by Norma Baird -Murray

Visit to the Lowry Centre May 15th 2012.

An early start for the Art History Group and friends to visit the Lowry Centre in the city of Salford. A comfortable journey was provided by wonderful Celtic Travel driver, Vic.

For the majority of passengers it was the first visit. We were in for a pleasant surprise!

The centre of Salford has had much regeneration over recent years, especially in the area of our destination. The Lowry Centre was situated on the banks of the Manchester Ship Canal and stood out as a majestic geometric building with nautical shapes to catch the eye. The entrance canopy, giving appearance of a tilted boat, was covered, as were the frontage and beyond, in stainless steel tiles inserted at an angle, glinting in the sunlight. We were told by our guide that the whole Centre would cover 5 ½ football pitches.

We were shown around the interior which at first glance was startling – with purple and orange colours fighting for dominance of the walls, together with the slightly slanting blue and white floor representing the sea. It was disconcerting to walk on this, particularly as our legs were not yet accustomed to being off the coach. However, we all agreed we liked it!

As well as the Gallery, the Centre contained two theatres. Once more we were taken aback at the colours. Theatre 1 was completely purple:-seats, carpets,walls and ceiling. Apparently it was the favourite colour of the architect! It had seating for over 1000. Theatre 2 was coloured a deep red. Many shows,plays etc take place in both. The local community also uses the theatres. The centre is a listed charity, currently generating an income.

The Lowry Centre itself was built in 2000 with money from the Lottery and other sources. It was opened by the Queen in the following year. The building was well served with cafes and restaurants and some of us managed an enjoyable meal before exploring the Lowry Gallery where a number of the artist's paintings were on display.

Laurence Lowry was born in 1887 and died in 1976. He was an only child and remained a bachelor. He painted from an early age and attended art schools but he also had a "day job", one of which was as a rent collector. This enabled him to observe life and people around him in industrial Salford and he illustrated these many times in his numerous paintings of street scenes. Football matches and industrial scenes, featuring not only people going to and from work, but set them against backgrounds of factories. His figures became known as "matchstick figures". Lowry himself did not give them this name, but as he is quoted as saying he "wasn't put out" by this label. He also branched out into the portraits. A self portrait is labelled Man with Red Eyes, painted after seeing a reflection in a mirror looking worn out from caring for his demanding mother. Several pictures were of an attractive woman named Ann. It is not known who she is, although efforts have been made to find out her identity.

In later life he painted scenes of the sea of which we saw several examples.

In 1932 Lowry's father died and it was found he had considerable debts. This made it impossible for Lowry and his mother to continue their comfortable lifestyle. His mother took to her bed where she remained until her death seven years later. Her son looked after her during this time. Lowry's mother was a fragile woman, both mentally and physically, who did nothing to encourage her son with his art. It was interesting to learn how Lowry's work was exhibited at the Royal Academy that year after her death. From this time he never looked back. In 1943 he was appointed as an official war artist. In 1953 the Football Association launched its "Football and Fine Art Competition." Lowry's Going to the Match won first prize.

A short film featuring Lowry was available. It showed Lowry himself being interviewed, seemingly a loveable man who was surprised at his own fame which he enjoyed for 47 years after his mother's death. A longer visit to Salford? So much to do and see, including the Imperial War Museum opposite the centre or a boat trip taking most of the day on the Manchester Ship Canal. Many thanks to Jill Mouncer, our Art History Leader for organising this outing.

Text by Enid Shaw

New Committee members elected at the AGM in March

Text Catherine Clarke, Berwyn Woolnough and Barbara Warner



Catherine Clarke joined the U3A in July 2011, just after being made redundant from Coleg Powys where she had worked as Learning Resources Co-ordinator for over 10 years.

After having worked full time for so long I needed some structure to my days/weeks/months and thought that the U3A would be a good place to start, and how right I was!

I immediately joined the Photographic, Art History and History groups and the Unfinished Objects (crafts) as soon as it started. We have had some excellent presentations from U3A members within these groups. I provided support on the last Computer Group and thoroughly enjoyed it. It's not always easy to join a group on your own and even though I didn't know anyone (apart from my husband) in these Groups, I have been made to feel so welcome by everyone.

I think the U3A is a brilliant organisation in that it brings like-minded people together. It's not high-brow and stuffy but very relaxed and easy-going. I have heard some fantastic talks given by people I would never have had the chance hear.

Llandrindod is quite a small place and I like being able to stop and speak to people I have met through being a member of the U3A. Having left work so recently, I think I missed putting my 'little grey cells' to work but being on the committee is changing that, especially as now I'm Interest Group Co-ordinator. I would dearly love to have more groups organised so if anyone has an idea for a new group I would love to hear from them, even if they don't have a clear idea of how the group should be structured.

I know that Llandrindod U3A will go from strength to strength and we will have more members. I would like more Interest Groups to reflect the wide range of interests and expertise such a large group of people have.

***Berwyn Woolnough** has been a member of U3A for about 15 months, though many members will remember him as the speaker at our Christmas Lecture in 2009, when he held us all in rapt attention with his talk about Gershwin, beautifully illustrated with his own performance of several pieces of Gershwin's music Since becoming a member, Berwyn has joined the Digital Photography Group and has recently started two new groups - the Bridge Group and the Recorder Group. Not content with that, he has now been elected onto the committee!*

What I like about U3A is that it brings together like-minded people so that they can share and develop their particular interests and skills. It's a simple aim and it works well.

I stood for Committee because I was already a group leader and further involvement in the organisation seemed to be a natural and attractive proposition. And what do I think so far? The two meetings I've attended have been business-like, congenial and, most pleasingly, brief. Oh, and the quality of the coffee and biscuits has been pretty awesome! There's a frequently quoted "law" - not Murphy's, that's another story - which states that, given enough time, most people are promoted to jobs which are beyond their capability. I have to tell you that this has just proved true for me, because I've suddenly become the projector manager/PowerPoint supremo, a post for which I have no expertise whatsoever. I'm told that the in-house training will be intensive. It will need to be. Apart from the mastery of my new role, my aim for the next year is to get the recorder group on stage as often as possible. We already have a booking to appear at the Rock Park Pump Rooms on September 29th as part of the "Live at the Canopy" series of events, and we'll be providing a bit of cabaret for the Christmas lunch. Two dates for your diary.....!



Visit to Bad Rappenau

As I announced at the May meeting, I am looking into the possibility of arranging a small group (probably 15-20 people) visit to our twin town in Germany, probably next May, to be arranged through the Twinning Associations.

Bad Rappenau - with whom we have been twinned for 10 years - is very keen for groups to visit from Llandrindod. Visits are well organised & they can be tailored to our requirements. Accommodation would be provided with host families, or you could stay in a hotel at your own expense. Bad Rappenau is in southern Germany, about 55km SE of Heidelberg & 75km north of Stuttgart. It is an 18+ hour direct drive, so travel would have to be by air & road (apparently rail isn't feasible).

I have already started talking to the Twinning Associations in both Llandrindod & Bad Rappenau - when I have something more concrete I will let the membership know. In the meantime, if you might be interested in this trip, please let me know - my phone number is 823806 - or email me at malvern@5maple.freemove.co.uk More details on the website.

JANE MALVERN

WANTED!

Members for new interest groups

GOOD NEWS! The **Natural History** group has its first outing on 10 am on June 14th at Llandrindod Lake. Meet outside the Lakeside Restaurant and bring sturdy footwear, waterproofs if needed, plus your own food and drink. More members wishing to enjoy and learn about the natural world are very welcome to join. For more information contact (email) Martina Holmes, martinaholmes@mail.com (telephone): Pam Morello, Tel. 01597 860623

NEEDED - Someone to lead a **Spanish Conversation** group. Two people who can speak a bit of Spanish (enough for shopping and restaurants) want to progress. Can you help them and anyone else who wants to join?

We already have one very successful **Book Circle** and a couple of other members have expressed an interest in starting a second group. Are you interested in joining? Being a part of a book group is an excellent way of reading authors you might not have thought of reading.

Two people have expressed an interest in the **Classics**, to start in the autumn. Anyone else interested?

A couple of people have shown an interest in joining an **Art** group (as in drawing and painting). We need someone to lead and help us - not necessarily teach us. Are you willing to help us? Would you like to join us?

If you are interested in joining any of these groups or any other group, please get in touch with me. New groups can start now or in the autumn - any time to suit the participants.

Catherine Clarke, Interest Group Co-ordinator Catherine@llandrindod-u3a.org 01597 811431

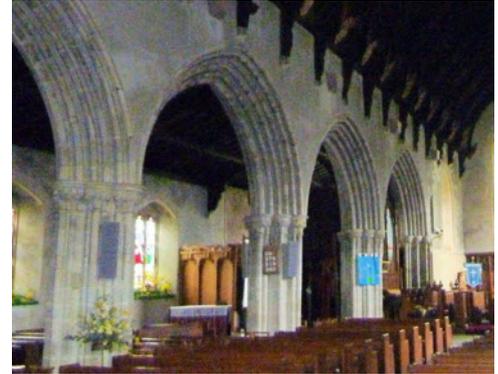
The Church Visiting Group goes to:



Llanidloes - St. Idloes

The most noteworthy features in this church are derived from the Cistercian Abbey at Abbeycwmhir. When the monasteries were dissolved at the time of the Reformation there were rich pickings for those in a position to take advantage of them. There is no doubt that much of the fine stonework in the Abbey was carted away to Llanidloes and placed in the church.

Most notable is the magnificent five-bay arcade with richly carved capitals typical of the years around 1200 with the earliest datable to 1190. The stone corbels supporting the roof are also from the Abbey as is the south doorway.



The hammerbeam roof is the most elaborate in the county and dates from the mid 16th century. It is much like the East Anglian roofs and suggests that St. Idloes was a church of some wealth and significance

in the late Middle Ages.

St Curig, Llangurig

St. Curig died in the year 550 having founded a Christian community at Capel Curig in North Wales as well as a Celtic monastery or 'clas' here in Llangurig.

Celtic monasteries were quite different from those established by the Cistercians, Benedictines and other continental orders some 600 years later. They were simply loosely knit gatherings of itinerant holy men living in individual huts within a circular enclosure. These 'monks' would travel over wide areas preaching, teaching and ministering to the poor and sick according to their particular capabilities. The 'clas' was no more than a base to which they might occasionally return and no doubt it also gained a reputation as a place to which those in any kind of need would come for help.

The churchyard at Llangurig is raised and circular and this confirms its ancient origins. The present church is largely of the 15th century and much restored by the Victorians.

Interestingly, when the Cistercian Abbey at Strata Florida was built it took control of the site at Llangurig from about 1180 by which time a small church probably stood within the circular enclosure.



There is an unexpected connection between the present church and the Royal Family and a small brass plate as well as a tiny crown fixed on one of the pews at the front of the nave is a reminder of this.

In 1917 the young Duke of York spent some weeks at Clochfaen Hall, a substantial house which can be seen from the porch of the church itself. He was later to become George VI when his elder brother, Edward, abdicated in order to marry Mrs Simpson, an American divorcee. He never enjoyed robust health and had been sent here to recover from a recent illness. It seems that he worshipped at St. Curig's on at least one occasion.

Contributed by Adele and Robert Bevan and Tony Hodges